

Chris O'Brien

From: Rush, Elizabeth <Elizabeth_Rush@brown.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, April 13, 2021 9:18 AM
To: House Finance Committee; Rep. Abney, Marvin L.
Subject: Testimony in SUPPORT of Budget Article 12 Section 12d Perinatal Doula Services and H5929 The Doula Reimbursement Act

To Chairperson Abney and members of the House Committee on Finance,

My name is Elizabeth Rush and I live in Providence, Rhode Island. I am in strong support of Budget Article 12 Section 12d and bill H5929 The Doula Reimbursement Act. This budget article and bill are crucial to improving the health and safety of pregnant individuals, particularly Black and Brown families. A doula is a nonmedical professional trained in childbirth who provides emotional, physical, and informational support to a person who is expecting, is experiencing labor, or has recently given birth. A doula's purpose is to help people have a safe, memorable, and empowering birthing experience. This bill has been crafted collaboratively by doulas, birthing families, community organizers, doula advocates, and legislators, I support a bill that reflects the ongoing input of these key stakeholders.

I was lucky enough to have a doula supported birth during the pandemic. So many of the positive statistics you hear about the powerful impact doulas have on the birth process I experienced during my own labor. Because I wanted to limit my time in the hospital and my possible exposure to coronavirus (this was back in May of 2020) I labored for longer than most women at home. Any time I felt like I was getting stuck, like my labor wasn't progressing, my doula suggested changing my laboring position in really specific ways. When I felt pain in my left leg she suggested putting it up on a step and stretching into it. As soon as I did this the labor started to progress. This happened again and again as I worked to bring my baby into the world. I was able to have a medication free labor, one in which I was present throughout, with no need for any kind of postpartum surgery. I can tell you that thanks to my doula my labor is one of the most powerful and transformative experiences of my life.

My doula was also there to help me in the complicated aftermath of giving birth during the pandemic. I was discharged from the hospital and babe, husband and I came home. This being my first baby I really didn't know what to do or expect. My doula coached me through the process of learning to breastfeed, change diapers, and burp my newborn. Each of which would have been much more difficult without her help. She also offered me vital emotional support as I learned how to take on this new role of becoming a mother.

I cannot express how much my doula meant to me and to my baby. Often I say that it was almost as if she became a part of our family, the wise older sister I never had, during those intense months. Supporting laboring women means supporting doulas. It is as simple as that.

In closing, I urge you to support, Budget Article 12 Section 12d Perinatal Doula Services and H5929 The Doula Reimbursement Act

Warmly,
Elizabeth Rush

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